
**PORTHMADOG HARBOUR CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE,
09 OCTOBER, 2013**

PRESENT:

Councillor Alwyn Gruffydd, (Chairman)
Councillor Selwyn Griffiths, (Vice-chairman)

Councillors: Jason Humphreys (Gwynedd Council), along with Messrs Gwyn Davies (Porthmadog Town Council), Dr John Morris (Leisure Interests Representative), Peter L. Williams (RNLI, Cricieth), David McLean (Landowners' Interests) and Robert Owen (Commercial Interests).

ALSO PRESENT: Barry Davies (Maritime and Country Parks Officer), Llŷr B. Jones (Senior Manager - Economy and Community), David O'Neill (Harbourmaster), Ioan Hughes (Member Support and Scrutiny Officer), John Wyn Jones, Bryn P. Jones, Malcolm Humphreys (Maritime and Country Parks Unit Officers).

1. CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED to re-elect Councillor Alwyn Gruffydd as chairman of this committee for the year 2013/14.

2. VICE-CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED to re-elect Councillor Selwyn Griffiths as vice-chairman of this committee for the year 2013/14.

3. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

No declarations of personal interest were received from any members present.

4. MINUTES

The Chairman signed the minutes of the previous meeting of this Committee, held on 10 October 2012, as a true record.

5. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Reference was made to the enquiry made regarding disabled parking on beaches and land of the Maritime Department.

Specific attention was given to the possibility of allowing free parking for the disabled on Morfa Bychan Beach. The Maritime and Country Parks Officer noted that the issue had been considered approximately seven years ago. At that time, it was decided that it would be unfair for some to take advantage of avoiding payments and that any reduction should not be approved.

He added that this was an entrance fee rather than a fee for parking and he did not anticipate that any change would be introduced in 2014. He noted that the fee was £4 a day and deemed that this was very reasonable.

Some members expressed dissatisfaction and it was noted that some needed to go to the beach for medical reasons.

A member referred to an arrangement that existed in the past when local residents had free access to the beach. He suggested that this arrangement could be re-introduced or at least an arrangement could be introduced so that some of the receipts could be submitted for the benefit of the local community.

RESOLVED that the Maritime and Country Parks Officer submits observations at the next meeting on the principle of allowing disabled access.

4. MARITIME SERVICE REPORT

a) Port Marine Safety Code

i) Members were guided through the contents of the Marine Safety Code by the Senior Manager - Economy and Community and the Maritime and Country Parks Officer. It was confirmed that the Council Cabinet had agreed with operational arrangements and accountability for the management duties of Gwynedd Council's Urban Harbours in accordance with the Marine Safety Code, including undertaking the functions of 'Duty Holder'. In addition, the Cabinet had decided that a standard constitution would be adopted by the current Harbour Consultative Committees as part of the new arrangements.

Members had received a copy of the Marine Safety Code in advance and it was explained that it was relevant to all harbour authorities in the United Kingdom. A national standard for port marine safety was set with the Safety Code.

Further reference was made to the main aspects of the Code, namely:

- Accountability for Marine Safety;
- Documents;
- Harbour Committees.

In terms of Accountability for Marine Safety, it was confirmed that the Council Cabinet would operate as 'Duty Holder' to accept the responsibility. In order to ensure effective safety management, a 'Designated Person' had to be identified to provide independent quality assurance to the 'Duty Holder' that the marine safety system was operating effectively. As a result, the Maritime and Country Parks Service would submit a report to the Cabinet on an annual basis.

Reference was made to harbour committees' terms of reference, such as the Porthmadog Harbour Consultative Committee, and the importance of their contribution and how the changes would aim to reconcile arrangements across the County was underlined.

ii) During the ensuing discussion, reference was made to the potential changes to the membership of harbour committees and the fact that the Council Cabinet would appoint the members following consultation with the current members of the Committee and users of the harbour.

It was suggested that changes could be made in the membership of this Committee, such as having two representative from the Town Council instead of one as it was now.

In response, it was noted that flexibility was required but again there was a need for consistency across the County in terms of the size of the Committees.

In addition, reference was made to the importance of local input and a member noted that the needs of individual harbours should be met and that the membership of the Committee should not be increased.

A member noted that the Area Forum should receive information regarding the activities and that the link between the forums should be stronger.

The Cabinet Member - Economy explained that it would create a link between this Committee and the Cabinet and the information would therefore be channelled through the Committee. There would be no formal contact with the Area Forum, however, nothing would prevent the forum from receiving any information.

As part of the terms of reference of the Harbour Committee, it was noted that the Cabinet would have a duty to consult with the Committee on any matter which, in the view of the Cabinet, would be likely to significantly affect the management, safety or development of the harbour. It would be the Cabinet's duty to consider any advice given to it by the Committee but it would not be obliged to act in accordance with the advice given.

It was noted that this was a starting point and that it would take time to establish a new pattern.

b) Power vessel/powerboat regulations for Gwynedd harbours and coasts

i) Information was submitted regarding the power vessel/powerboat regulations for Gwynedd harbours and coasts along with a Vessel Registration form - 2013/14 Season.

The Maritime and Country Parks Officer noted that guidance was provided in order to control powerboats and personal watercrafts. He added that a personal watercraft was not defined as a boat in accordance with Commercial Ships Legislation.

In terms of the situation in the vicinity of Porthmadog, it was noted that every effort was being made, with the available resources, to ensure that users adhered to the rules. It was explained that a strict registration procedure existed and that the staff had the experience and qualifications to deal with the work.

It was added that only a few complaints were received and considering the number of boats, incidents were extremely scarce. However, it was accepted that accidents happened and that this was very unfortunate.

Reference was also made to the connections of local businesses with the boats and that this should also be considered.

During the ensuing discussion the following main points were made:

- The behaviour of some powerboat and personal watercraft users was unruly and that they ignored all the rules;
- Powerboat regulations were ignored by many;
- The behaviour of some users did not conform to the rules or by-laws;
- Such activity should be prohibited from popular areas such as Carreg Samson;
- All users were not breaking the rules and some of them could be trained and warned if required;
- The vast majority of personal watercraft users had the appropriate equipment;
- Some problems were inevitable and the situation could be compared with those who drove cars along the roads.

In response to the situation, it was noted that the summer season this year had been extremely busy and the beaches were very important in terms of the economy and enjoyment. It was explained that verbal warnings had been provided to anyone who had been appearing to be breaking the rules and that over a hundred had been warned by Council staff during the summer.

It was added that the busy period derived from the size of the Gwynedd coastline and that there was room to be proud in what the County had to offer.

It was agreed that the situation should be reviewed during the winter and the local members and staff to consider the situation so that a report could be submitted at the next meeting of this Committee.

c) Navigational Aids

i) It was noted that there were lanterns on all 17 navigational aids in Porthmadog harbour throughout the year.

Following an inspection by Trinity House, it had been found that the aids were effective. However, it was intended to deal with the maintenance work of the navigation buoy.

ch) Registration

It was noted that there had been an increase in the number of personal watercrafts registered in 2013 with 36 registered in Porthmadog Harbour compared with 25 in 2012, and 129 had been registered in Morfa Bychan compared with 85 in 2012. This had come about in light of the favourable weather.

However, during recent years there had been a general trend for the numbers to decrease and it was believed that this was a reflection of the economic situation.

In response to an enquiry, it was noted that discussions were being held with the Sailing Club regarding the number of pontoons in Porthmadog harbour. It was emphasised that considerable research was required and that high costs needed to be considered.

In relation to the number of Gwynedd residents who moor locally, a call was made for more effective advertising. It was confirmed that work had been undertaken and officers were hopeful that progress would be seen.

d) Finance

The Maritime and Country Parks Officer led the members through the financial report noting that £8,000 of expenditure on two engines for the harbour's vessel had been an example of substantial investment.

In relation to the final report of Porthmadog Harbour 2012/13, reference was made to £11,000 of savings made in terms of employee costs. In addition, a saving of £17,000 was seen in relation to property maintenance.

Therefore, the total savings were nearly £30,000 and as the budget had decreased attention was drawn to the fact that this underlined effectiveness.

Therefore, the position was effective in Porthmadog, but the Officer warned that there had to be an aim of continuous improvement as very strict financial boundaries were in existence.

Staff were thanked for their dedication and reference was also made to the all important work of the RNLI.

Next Meeting

It was noted that the next meeting would be held on 5 March, 2014.

The meeting commenced at 5.30pm and concluded at 7.25pm.